

Best Practise Example

Objectives and Policies: Proposed Christchurch City Plan

Objective : Local community facilities

9.1 The provision of Provision for accessible community facilities to meet educational, spiritual, health, and other local needs.

Reasons

Local communities within the City require access to facilities on a regular basis, which serve local catchments. Examples of Community Centres that are such facilities include places of worship, pre-school facilities, halls and meeting places, community police stations and those offering medical, voluntary and welfare services. For the purpose of these policies, local community facilities do not include commercial retail services, or resident sole proprietor “home occupations”.

A key feature of these facilities and the services they offer is the need for them to be readily accessible, without long travelling times being involved. In this respect, the needs of disabled people, and especially disabled children, are particularly important. These facilities are an important component of reinforcing communities, their identity and viability. This objective is intended to recognise the role and provision of such facilities in the City Plan, and the framework for policies which affect their operations and establishment.

As many such facilities are located within living areas of the City, there is a close relationship between the objectives and policies of this section and those of the Living section of the Plan.

Policy : Location

9.1.1 To provide for local community facilities to locate within living areas of the City, but particularly in close proximity to suburban centres or on arterial roads.

Explanation and reasons

There has long been a tendency for local community facilities to prefer locations adjacent to larger shopping centres, or on arterial roads. This is a pattern of establishment which the Plan strongly promotes, because of the public convenience of co-location of services offered in community and commercial facilities, whilst minimising adverse impacts on the character, cohesiveness and pleasantness of the living environment. This latter factor relates to maintaining a pattern of residential activity whereby households are not isolated from residential neighbours by activities on adjoining sites where there is no permanent on site residential occupation, as is the case with most community facilities.

Accordingly, community facilities are promoted adjacent to larger suburban centres and on arterial routes as this enhances accessibility, community awareness of the availability of the services, minimises the impacts on residential coherence and

acknowledges the lower standards of amenity often found in such locations compared with other areas of the living environment. Promoting community facilities in these locations reinforces suburban centres and enhances convenience for local residents by co-location. Such provision is especially important for the elderly, children or those without access to cars, as public transport serves many of these centres. The scale of such facilities however, is controlled through provisions in the Plan where the level of traffic generation is significant and could adversely affect the efficient and safe functioning of arterial roads.

In the rural area, the provision of facilities offering local community services is typically on a small scale, and is promoted in existing rural settlements.

Policy : Managing effects

9.1.5 To ensure the effects of local community facilities are managed in a way which maintains amenity and in particular residential amenity and coherence.

Explanation and reasons

Community facilities can have adverse effects on adjoining activities, particularly residential activity. Effects on amenity can result wherever community facilities locate, but this is particularly significant within or adjoining living areas as sensitive environments and recognising that community facilities frequently seek such a location. The extent of these effects is generally related to the type, location, scale, traffic generation and hours of operation of the activity.

Adverse effects are greater (or are at least perceived to be greater and less tolerable) in local streets. A church may only generate significant activity within a narrow range of days or hours of the day; a medical practice may generate less “people” activity, but over a longer period; community use of halls or schools may cause disruption in the later evening.

Community facilities can have an obvious impact on residential coherence and amenity values. In recognition of the potential impacts and the tendency for these facilities to locate close to suburban centres or fronting arterial roads (and the advantages of this), there are also controls in the Plan to ensure the concentration of these facilities does not erode the dominant residential character. These relate to the aggregation of facilities influencing residential coherence, and other controls are incorporated to deal with matters such as traffic generation, noise, and scale.

Objective : Non-residential activities

11.3 Non-residential activities located within living areas which meet community needs, but do not detract from the and are consistent with maintaining a high standard of amenity values of the area in living areas.

Reasons

Non-residential activities are an integral part of the living environment in that they provide services to meet community needs, with many aiming principally to meet the needs of local residents. Examples of such activities include health facilities,

churches and community services. Non-residential activities may seek to establish within living areas for a number of reasons, including:

- when meeting the needs of local residents, a location in close proximity to where people live is desirable;
- although not necessarily serving local needs, a living area location may be desirable given the general level of amenity in such areas, as compared with other locations;
- strategic reasons of distribution may necessitate locating within the living environment as this occupies a significant land area within the City; or
- non-residential activity may be closely related to residential activity, such as working from home, and therefore co-location is necessary.

However, it is recognised that non-residential activities have the potential to create adverse effects for neighbouring sites and local communities relating to matters such as noise, traffic generation, hours of operation, visual detracting, the scale of operation and loss of residential neighbours. A high standard of amenity is sought for the living environment and living areas are therefore particularly sensitive to adverse effects on amenity values. The different living areas of the City anticipate different environmental outcomes specific to each, and the non-residential activities permitted to locate and performance standards associated with these activities, reflect the differences between these environments.

Policy : Local community facilities and services

11.3 To provide for local community facilities and services to locate within living areas, subject to compatibility with the existing character of different parts of the living environment, and maintaining residential coherence and amenity.

Explanation and reasons

Local community facilities and services, if appropriately controlled, are an important aspect of community development and are necessary for the practical, efficient and pleasant functioning of living areas. These activities include health services, churches, educational and day-care establishments which meet the needs of residents, principally within the surrounding living environment. The Plan provides for a range of these activities with minimal environmental impact, which meet standards for scale of activity and residential coherence, to locate within living areas.

The retention of residential activity on sites within the City's living areas is an essential determinant of the character, cohesiveness and pleasantness of the living environment. Loss of residential neighbours can result in adverse effects in terms of loss of security, friendship and fellowship, as well as loss of visual evidence of residential character. Residential coherence is therefore a key element and relevant to residential amenities, and it is important to ensure that the residential integrity of the living environment is not compromised through excessive intrusion of non-residential activities without a residential component, into the living area.

However, it is recognised that whilst on site residential occupation for most non-residential activities is desirable to maintain residential coherence, it is not always practical for activities having a clear relationship to the local community to expect people to live on the site. Churches and medical centres are examples of these.

Accordingly, such activities without a residential component are directed by provisions in the Plan to identified “community footprint” areas, in locations generally surrounding larger suburban centres. This recognises that the residential character of these areas may already be influenced by established non-residential activity, and that vehicle and pedestrian activity will tend to be greater in the vicinity of these centres than for locations further away. In addition to this, such activities having a clear relationship to the local community, but without a residential component are also provided for adjoining distributor or arterial roads, subject to controls on their proximity one to another to disperse activities and to ensure retention of residential neighbours and character.

The control of adverse effects of local community facilities and services, such as excessive scale, noise and traffic generation, are important to ensuring a high standard of residential amenity. However, the contribution of local community facilities and services to community development is also most important, as is ensuring that such facilities are in reasonable proximity to residents to support accessibility and convenience.

Policy : Home based employment

11.3.3 To provide for a range of home based employment opportunities throughout living areas, consistent with safeguarding the amenity values of the living environment.

Explanation and reasons

This policy provides for home-based employment opportunities which can be appropriately located in living areas in terms of effects on the surrounding living environment. Home based employment can take a variety of forms, for example screen printing, hairdressing and secretarial services, and consequently a range of potential adverse effects are possible, impacting upon other activities within the living environment and reducing residential amenity. These effects can relate to matters such as traffic generation, visual detracting, hours and scale of operation, noise and outdoor advertising.

Providing residential amenity values can be preserved, allowing home-based employment opportunities to locate in living areas will contribute to the economic development of the City. Whilst opportunities for employment may be limited, they nonetheless make a valuable contribution to overall employment in the City and equally, residents are enabled to work from their own homes and a limited amount of local employment is available to other residents.

Policy : Travellers accommodation

11.3.4 To provide for the accommodation needs of travellers and visitors to the City in limited, defined locations and on arterial roads in medium density living areas, whilst safeguarding the amenity values of adjoining living areas. To enable the accommodation needs of travellers and visitors to the City to be met in defined locations usually on arterial or collector roads, while ensuring to ensure that the amenity values of adjoining living areas are not adversely affected protected.

Explanation and reasons

Provision for travellers accommodation in the Plan confirms the existing pattern of travellers accommodation which has established in the City. Historically, travellers accommodation has established not only within the central city, but within or adjacent to a living environment in defined locations and usually on arterial roads. This reflects a desire by such activity to generally front main roads in close proximity to the city centre, for ease of identification and convenience for travellers. The Plan acknowledges the particular requirements of this type of activity, the historical pattern of tourist accommodation development that has occurred and the potential effects such activity may generate, particularly in relation to living areas and residential activity. Encouraging the location of such activities in selected areas is expected to also reduce pressure for the removal of inner city housing stock and assist retaining the integrity of these important living environments.

The Policy pertains to the creation of new Living 5 Zones. These are generally most appropriately located on arterial or collector roads because of the relative ease of access, and the desirability of keeping tourist traffic out of residential streets. However, the policy also recognises established travellers accommodation activities in existing Living 5 zones not located on arterial or collector roads as they represent considerable investment and their effects have usually come over time to be absorbed into and accepted by the surrounding community. The Living 5 zone provides some security and scope for on-site redevelopment opportunities of this activity in a manner compatible with maintaining residential amenity values in surrounding areas. Travellers' accommodation that is proposed in other living zones will be required to meet the standards for "Other Activities". There are several relevant policies and objectives, directed towards avoiding or mitigating adverse effects, in this chapter which are relevant to these activities, eg Policies 11.4.8 and 11.4.12.

Any future development or expansion is subject to development standards and limitations which require a reasonably high standard of visual amenity and landscaping which complement that of surrounding living areas.

Policy : Service stations and taverns/hotels

11.3.5 To specifically recognise ensure opportunity for the on-site development of existing service stations and taverns/hotels within the living areas, acknowledging the existence of such activities, and provide for further service stations and taverns/hotels environment subject to safeguarding avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects on residential amenity values.

Explanation and reasons

Provision for service stations in the Plan within living areas recognises the historical distribution of such activities in the City. Historically service stations have often established within or adjacent to a living environment and usually on arterial roads. Confinement to business areas would not allow the necessary strategic distribution of such services across all areas of the City.

These facilities are often well established, representing significant investment in building and site development. In providing a service to the community, issues such

as energy efficiency and environmental effects associated with fossil fuel usage support the distribution of these activities in close proximity to the customer.

The potential adverse effects associated with service stations primarily relate to traffic generation, visual detraction (such as from large signage), noise and the removal of residential dwellings. However, the needs of such activities for visual exposure and often strategically located large sites are also recognised. These issues will form the basis for consideration of extended and new facilities within the living environment which will usually occur by way of the resource consent process.

As with service stations, a number of taverns/hotels have are established within the living environment. Provisions in the Plan therefore, are an acknowledgment of the existence of some taverns/hotels within living areas, with provision for on-site redevelopment to occur. Hours As with many service stations, there are environmental advantages in support of the distribution of these activities in close proximity to consumers, and hours of operation and amenity/traffic matters will be important considerations for extended and new facilities.

11.4.5 To ensure that the outdoor component of non-residential activity is screened to protect the privacy and outlook of adjoining sites.

11.4.6 To ensure that the hours of operation of non-residential activity does not unduly compromise amenity values, and particularly privacy and security of adjoining development.

Explanation and reasons

Privacy and outlook are very important components of residential amenity. The first of these policies focuses on the design and layout of a site. Major factors affecting privacy and outlook in terms of design and layout are the height and bulk of development, the distances of buildings from site boundaries and the gross floor space of buildings. Through controlling these elements, protection to some extent of privacy, outlook and also views can be achieved. Other aspects such as landscaping and screening will also influence these matters, but generally not to such an extent. Privacy and views however, cannot be totally protected, either on the hills or the plains of Christchurch. The policy further acknowledges that controlling elements to offer some protection of privacy, outlook and also views must be balanced with owners or developers reasonable expectations to develop land.

Within the hill suburbs, older residential development tended to be built to a lesser height than contemporary development. Thus, in older established areas newer development, including additions, has the potential to compromise views and outlook for existing residences. Therefore to minimise this potential, in determining appropriate heights of buildings, regard shall be had to the time an area was developed and the consequent nature of development. In addition, given the visual prominence of the hill slopes, maximum building heights can limit bulk and dominance of buildings and assist in maintaining some opportunities for views.

The second of these policies seeks to control the establishment of monitoring systems, look-out platforms and towers for the purposes of monitoring people on neighbouring

sites. It is not the intention of this policy to restrict the establishment of look-out platforms and towers where the intention is primarily to enable people to enjoy views or scenery. However, the establishment of structures primarily to enable monitoring of people beyond the site, is not considered appropriate.

The third of these policies seeks screening of the outdoor component of non-residential activities. This relates particularly to storage, which is often associated with non-residential activities and can be unsightly, and compromise the outlook of adjoining sites.

The fourth of these policies also relates to non-residential activities, specifically to their hours of operation. The hours of operation of non-residential activities have the potential to compromise the amenity of living areas, through impacts such as noise arising from activity and associated vehicle and pedestrian generation. These effects can be as a result of operations during hours when neighbours can reasonably expect a more peaceful environment, or as a result of cumulative effects of extended periods of operation from which there is little respite for neighbours. Non-residential activities, particularly operating at night, may also be perceived to represent a risk to security of adjoining development, especially if people or vehicles are attracted to a site in numbers. Accordingly, the Plan includes provisions to ensure that non-residential activities operate for periods and at hours compatible with protecting the amenity values of the surrounding living area.

Policy : Noise

11.4.9 To ensure noise levels associated with non-residential activities are consistent with maintaining a high standard of amenity within living areas.

Explanation and reasons

Possibly one of the most significant effects on residential amenity is that of noise. The living area is one of the most sensitive noise environments within the City and this is a major factor in considering impacts of noise, as are the duration, frequency, intensity and time at which noise occurs. Intrusive noise can have a serious effect on a person's enjoyment of their property and cause undue stress, annoyance and anxiety for people exposed to it.

Experience has shown that intrusive noise in a living area is most likely to result from non-residential activities and therefore the Plan includes provisions setting standards for noise levels applying to such activities. This acknowledges a need for specific standards of compliance to enable proposers and operators to be reasonably certain of expected outcomes. Similarly, such standards are needed to indicate to potential recipients of noise, to what degree they can expect to hear sound from such activities.

Noise impacts of a routine "lifestyle" nature, including that of domestic social events and domestic dogs, will be dealt with under the excessive noise provisions in Part XII of the Act, and the under the Dog Control and Hydatids Act. The City Plan and related resource consent processes are considered a cumbersome and inappropriate means of dealing with these types of noise intrusion.

Policy : Scale

11.4.13 To ensure that the scale of non-residential buildings and activities is compatible with the scale of those of the surrounding living environment.

Explanation and reasons

The general nature of the living environment is a key factor influencing residential amenity. The nature of the living environment, and particularly that of suburban living areas, is an environment dominated by residential, rather than non-residential activity. In maintaining and enhancing residential amenity values therefore, it is important that non-residential buildings and activities are compatible with the scale and effects of other buildings and activities, particularly in suburban living areas. It is also important that these activities do not result in visual dominance of buildings, and remain incidental to residential activities and buildings on individual sites.

Notwithstanding this, there are activities which are non-residential in nature but necessary for the practical, efficient and pleasant functioning of the living area. Examples of such activities include health services, educational and day-care establishments which meet the needs of residents, principally within the surrounding living environment. It is accepted therefore that where an activity is serving an important local function for residents, a loss of residential activity on a site is likely to occur, and that the scale of activity could be justifiably greater than for other non-residential activities. Whilst this is acknowledged by provisions in the Plan, it is balanced through the concept of "community footprints", with maintaining residential coherence, and relating the scale of buildings and activities with that of the surrounding locality.

It is further recognised that where living areas adjoin medium-large business areas, such as some suburban centres, they may already be characterised by buildings and sites which are of a larger scale than residential buildings and sites generally. Given also the nature of suburban centres, pedestrian and vehicular movements tend to be greater in their vicinity than for living area locations further away. The Plan therefore recognises that non-residential buildings and activities can be of a larger scale and attract greater numbers of people in such locations, whilst remaining in character with the scale of other buildings, sites and activities in the vicinity.

Environmental results anticipated